

A Study of the Christ

Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Parables by the Sea	13:1-35	4:1-34	8:4-18	
Parables explained in private	13:36-53			
Disciples ordered to cross sea	8:18	4:35	8:22	
Jesus calms a stormy sea	8:23-27	4:36-41	8:23-25	
Legion cast out of violent man	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
Jesus sails to Capernaum	9:1	5:21	8:40	

Overriding Principles

- Those who want to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom will search them out in a selfless enterprise of true faith and love.
- The law of spiritual growth is the same as that of the physical world; we are either growing or dying.
- Hearts provide the soil for God's garden of spiritual produce.
- The Kingdom of God is to be viewed through other than the eyes of flesh.
- God rules over the seen—He thus proves His rule over the unseen.
- Wind, waves, demons, or whatever may be, it cannot stand against God.

Main Points

- To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 13:11).
- Therefore I speak to them in parables: because while seeing they do not see and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand (Matt. 13:13).
- And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear much fruit with perseverance (Lk. 8:15).
- And the men marveled, saying, "What kind of a man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Matt. 8:27)?

- And behold, they cried out, saying, "What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come to torment us before the time" (Matt. 8:29)?

Secondary Points of History, Culture, Words, and Grammar

- The word "parable" comes from the Greek word *parabolē* meaning: "throwing or setting beside." A simple way to remember the meaning of the word parable is to see it as an earthly story with a spiritual application (note Ps. 78:1-2).
- Jesus used parables, as well as other teaching methods to both reveal mysteries to the faithful and keep kingdom secrets from those who did not have honest and good hearts (**Matt. 13:10-17**).
- The Parable of the Soils (**Matt. 13:4-9, 18-23**), drives home the point that the condition of the heart has everything to do with whether or not we will receive the word of God.
- The seed that fell "beside the road" has a point that drew upon the gardening practices of the day. Jews living in the city walked to garden places outside the city walls. The paths to and from these garden plots became as hard as rock—the seed could not get into the ground. People with hearts hardened to spiritual things do not understand the Scriptures; they do not let the word inside. It never has a chance (**Matt. 13:4, 19**; cf. I Cor. 2:14; Jn 14:17, 22-23).
- The seed that fell on the "rocky places" spoke to occasions when seed fell on a shallow layer of soil just over the surface of a slab of rock. The shallowness of the soil allowed for quick initial growth, but dry weather would quickly evaporate all the moisture from the soil. Some hearts allow no depth of growth; they allow only a shallow relationship with God. When difficulties arise, immediately there results an abandonment of the truth. No commitment (**Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21**; cf. Jn. 6:60, 66).
- The seed that fell "among thorns" would be challenged by the weeds that would spring up as competition for nourishment. Worry, the deceitfulness of wealth, various pleasures, and the desire for other things will choke the life from the word. God must have no rivals if He is to have His way in the heart of a believer (**Matt. 13:7, 22**; cf. Matt. 6:33; Jn. 6:68).
- The seed that came to rest on the "good soil" was the only seed that actually would bear fruit. The characteristics of such a heart include: listening,

understanding, acceptance, honesty, goodness, and perseverance. Self denial and love are indispensable commodities for a heart that would belong to the Christ. The values of God are to be the values of each disciple (**Matt. 13:8, 23**; cf. Lk. 9:23; Jn. 14:15; Matt. 5:3-16).

- The disciple of Jesus will share the treasures of his heart with others (**Mk. 4:21-22**; cf. I Pet. 2:9).
- The phrase "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear," is a colloquial expression designed to address the serious nature of listening to the word of God (**Mk. 4:23**; **Matt. 13:9**).
- The importance of our hearing is further emphasized as we are told to, "take care what you listen to," and "take care how you listen" (**Mk. 4:24**; **Lk. 8:18**).
- The parables grouped in the verses we are presently studying are styled "Kingdom Parables." The Greek word for 'kingdom' is *basileia*, meaning: "rule or reign." These parables introduce us into the way God administers His will in the world and in His special rule over the saved (cf. Eph. 1:18-23).
- In the Parable of Rapid Growth (**Mk. 4:26-29**), we are introduced to the amazing way God's word can take hold and prosper. The farmer of the parable does not understand the "how" of the growth, but he does know what he is supposed to do to take advantage of the harvest (cf. Jn. 4:35-42). God's ways can be rather mysterious to our earthly sensitivities and lack of understanding—we need, however, to take advantage of our opportunities and work as God instructs. His ways are best and will bring God-approved results.
- The Parable of the Tares (**Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43**), demonstrates that Satan also sows seed. He disguises the results to give the appearance of a godly product. To unduly seek out Satan's handiwork would be very disruptive to the kingdom. This is obviously not speaking against corrective church discipline; the kingdom here is the world, not the church (i.e. I Cor. 5:1-13). This particular parable is designed to alert us to Satan's wiles and to caution us not to act until we are sure—wait until the fruit is obvious. A tare looks like wheat early in its development. To try to get them out of a wheat field early in the growing cycle would result in our mistakenly uprooting much wheat (Cf. Matt. 7:15-23). We know that God will judge those whose sins are not as obvious as those that we are to judge (cf. Ps. 73). Judgment will vindicate the saints and destroy the wicked (II Thess. 1:6-10).

- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (**Matt. 13:31-32**; cf. Matt. 17:20) makes a powerful point about the amazing things God can accomplish from small beginnings. We must believe (Eph. 3:20-21)!
- The Parable of the Leaven (**Matt. 13:33-35**), similar to the previous parable, demonstrates the power God has to change big things with small things. Never underestimate what God can do with a willing heart (cf. Rev. 3:7-8)!
- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (**Matt. 13:44**), and the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (**Matt. 13:45-46**), both show that finding salvation is worth more than anything else we might otherwise acquire. When we understand the value of the Kingdom, all else seems worthless (cf. Phil. 3:7-14).
- The Parable of the Dragnet (**Matt. 13:47-50**), shows that while the Gospel is for all, not all find acceptability with God (cf. Matt. 22:14; Acts 17:32-33; II Tim. 2:14-21).
- The Parable of the Wise Scribe (**Matt. 13:51-52**) shows that previous understandings are to both serve as foundations and also grow as we encounter new truths.
- After the extended time spent on parables about the nature of the Kingdom. Jesus powerfully demonstrated His power over the elements by calming a storm (**Matt. 8:18, 23-27**). The faith of the Apostles is exposed as being "little." Trials reveal things about us we need to know. Trials build character (Jas. 1:2-4).
- Consider the difference between the "small" faith that is likened to a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32) and the "little" faith Jesus condemned during the storm.
- What immaturity we show when we think Jesus doesn't care (**Mk. 4:38**).
- The Question, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the winds and the sea obey Him," is one like many others concerning Jesus that has only one reasonable answer (cf. Matt. 16:13-17).
- Jesus healing of the two demon possessed men of the Gadarenes makes a number of points about Jesus identity and the reactions it brought (**Matt. 8:28-34**). Jesus was well known to the demons (cf. Jas. 2:19). The tormented men, one of whom was dominant and thus mentioned exclusively by Mark and Luke, knew Jesus was their only hope. The town's people were more concerned with their merchandising endeavors than they were with the only hope they had for eternal life. Jesus is who He is regardless of circumstances or how He is perceived

(cf. Mk. 12:14), but those He encounters see Him in keeping with the quality of their own hearts (cf. Matt. 11:6).

- It is most amazing that materialistic concerns would cause people to be fearful of Jesus and ask Him to leave.
- There has been much discussion about the appropriateness of Jesus casting the demons into swine, an act that led to their death. First of all, Jesus didn't ever do anything wrong. Secondly, whether we understand all the particulars of this account really does not matter, its message of Jesus' sovereignty is clear.
- The demons preferred inhabiting swine to having no body at all. This may help us to define demons as spirits of evil dead people. They were allowed to possess men so Jesus could demonstrate His power over the unseen world of evil (**Matt. 8:31**).
- Unlike on many other occasions, Jesus here does not suppress one of the men He healed from proclaiming what Jesus had done for him (**Mk. 5:18-20**; cf. Matt. 8:4). This might be explained by noting that Jesus was in a Gentile area and the news about Him would not fuel the fire of those Jews who sought to destroy Him.

Relationship to the Church

- Christianity is a powerful expression of God's Kingdom.
- We must not think that we fail when hearts are not receptive to the Gospel. Each heart is different and not all are receptive.
- God rules not only in the church but also in all the creation.
- Justice will prevail.
- Let us beware lest our hold on the world causes us to bid Jesus to leave us.
- God can do amazing things through the church!

Who is Jesus?

- He is the one whose wisdom we need to appreciate as we live before a watching world of doubters.
- He knows how the Kingdom is to operate and we don't—we need His wisdom.
- He speaks, and what He says is done (cf. Gen 1:3).